The Big 4-Oh

kidbrothers.net/release/novdec95.html

By the time you get this issue of RELEASE and read (if you do read) this little essay of mine, I will have celebrated my fortieth birthday. In my mid to late twenties I had some romantic, highly exaggerated notions about an early death - taking off at 33 - joining the company of Mozart, Foster, Jesus and other immortals who checked out in their early thirties. But this was a party I didn't get an invitation to - a gang I didn't belong in (me not being a genius and all). So, in Chicago I had my own party - celebrating the fun of being alive as opposed to the mystique of having an untimely death.

Because it's better to be alive than to be dead - that's for sure. And believe it or not - there are certain advantages in being 40 over being 18. Of course, there are certain disadvantages too, but - in keeping with the spirit of the 90's, I don't mind viewing those "disadvantages" as "challenges." Paul, I think had the perfect take on the pluses and minuses of life and death - "to live is Christ, to die is gain," so, that having been settled, I have made out a list of credits and debits about being younger and older - an issue that didn't seem as large or confused in the first century as it does at the end of the 20th:

At 18, if you have oversized aspirations, the whole world sees you as a dreamer. At 40, you get a reputation for being a visionary.

At 18, if you've thrown in the towel, you're called a loser. At 40, you're called down-to-earth, a realist.

At 18, if you play in the rain or howl at the moon, if you paint or invent or compose songs or poems, you're accused of being childish. At 40, you are praised for being childlike.

At 18, time fits you like a pair of pants big enough to swim in. At 40, time fits so tight you can't button it's collar.

At 18, your sails are full. At 40, your rudder runs deep.

At 18, people misjudge your character flaws as being mere bad habits that they might change. At 40, people misjudge every bad habit as being the

mark of weak character and they either dismiss you as being a lesson in reprobation or just accept you as a friend. Anyway, you graduate from being a missionary project into being either a lost cause or one of the gang.

At 18, no one knows as much as you. At 40, you begin to understand the wisdom of Solomon in his saying:

"Do not be overrighteous, neither be overwise - why destroy yourself? Do not be overwicked and do not be a fool - why die before your time? It is good to grasp the one and not let go of the other. The man who fears God will avoid all extremes." - Ecclesiastes 7:16-18.

So, stay alive. "A living dog is better than a dead lion" - and HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ALL OF YOU FROM ME.

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